

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Testing

Inconclusive Test Results

National Enhanced BSE Sampling

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) recently began an aggressive plan to obtain information about the possible presence of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in the U.S. APHIS is testing samples from as many cattle as possible in a targeted population over a 12-18 month period.

BSE Sampling in California

Samples have been collected from the targeted population in California since June 1, 2004. Samples from California, Nevada and Arizona are tested for BSE in the approved regional laboratory - the Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory, University of California, at Davis.

Sample Testing

A screening test at the laboratory is performed on the brain sample. If the result is negative, no further testing is necessary. If the result is inconclusive, the sample is forwarded on to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa.

Due to the sensitivity of the initial screening test, inconclusive results are expected and many will be negative on further testing.

Inconclusive Results

When a regional laboratory classifies a sample as inconclusive, it is sent to NVSL to determine if the sample is positive for BSE. Many of the inconclusive results are negative on further testing using the "gold standard" test – an immunohistochemistry test. The carcass and products are held until the testing is final - nothing from that animal enters the human food chain or animal feed chain until final testing determines the sample to be negative.



Human Health is Protected

BSE is not spread by contact in either humans or in cattle. The spread to humans is thought to be through consumption of products contaminated with the BSE agent. Several protective measures are in place to safeguard human health:

- Cattle that appear ill, are unable to walk, or show signs of neurologic disease are banned from the human food supply.
- Products from cattle that could carry the BSE agent (such as spinal cord or brain) are banned from the food supply.
- Neural tissue is banned from products labeled "meat".
- Air-injection stunning is banned.

Animal Health is Protected

Since 1989, the U.S. has put measures in place to keep BSE out of the country and prevent it from developing in U.S. cattle:

- The importation of cattle and specific cattle products is banned from countries where BSE is present.
- The feeding of animal-derived protein that can spread BSE to ruminants is banned.

CDFA Animal Health Branch Offices	
Sacramento (HQ)	916-654-1447
Modesto	209-491-9350
Ontario	909-947-4462
Redding	530-225-2140
Tulare	559-685-3500
USDA/APHIS/VS 916-854-3900 or 877-741-3690	
Toll Free BSE Surveillance	1-866-536-7593